

7 April 2009

New Soldier Integration into OEF

By Captain Wade Sweeny, TF Hammer PAO

FOB Sharana, Afghanistan – At nearly 12 months into their deployment, Task Force Hammer has successfully integrated over 150 follow-on Soldiers into combat operations in Afghanistan. By effectively planning and coordinating with the rear detachment, TF Hammer streamlines the process from a new Soldier's arrival at Fort Hood (or Fort Sill for B Company) through prescribed individual readiness training (IRT) and Soldier Readiness Preparation (SRP) at Fort Hood and on to their assigned Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Afghanistan.

Developed early in the deployment, the system has been validated by repeated success over the past twelve months. After in-processing into the installation and the battalion, a Soldier draws



SPC Carrillo instructs Soldiers on evaluating a casualty

his theater-specific additional issue items and Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) equipment from CIF, then participates in III Corps IRT. Over thirteen days, a Soldier is trained on weapons procedures, environmental concerns, hot and cold weather injuries, force protection and legal issues. Additionally, the unit trains and validates the Soldier's proficiency in the Army Warrior Tasks. After this requisite training, a Soldier begins SRP to ensure his personal affairs are in order and he is medically cleared for combat duty. The process, from a Soldier's arrival at Fort Hood until fully-trained and certified, requires a minimum of 32 days. The Soldier is then ready to join the battalion forward in

Afghanistan, depending on the availability of flights.

Upon arrival in Afghanistan, there is additional required training conducted at Bagram Airfield over two days. These classes include a wide-range of topics such as finance in-processing, command policies on sexual harassment and sexual assault, facilities and points of contact, medical training and an overview of the Improved First Aid Kit (IFAK). Additional classes include IED-defeat, mine awareness, and recent insurgent tactics. Following day two of training, Soldiers proceed to FOB Sharana for their final training prior to linking up with their company.

At FOB Sharana Hammer Soldiers receive in-briefs and participate in three additional days of training, conducted by Headquarters and Support Company. Days one and two cover Escalation of Force (EOF) procedures and rehearsals, weapons clearing, convoy operations, vehicle recovery, Improved Outer Tactical Vest (IOTV), communication systems, and FOB standards. Day three includes a "crash course" in combat lifesaving and use of the IFAK and Warrior Aid & Litter Kit (WALK). Upon completion of these, Soldiers are ready to travel to company bases.

The feedback on the battalion-level training has been overwhelmingly positive. Soldiers particularly saw value in the medical courses, since the IFAK class was more detailed than the overview given at BAF. The WALK was new to many Soldiers, and hands-on training has been particularly helpful.

The communication systems are equally beneficial. Soldiers are able to work with the BFT, MBITRs and Harris radios with knowledgeable instructors. Additionally, they use the systems particular to the battalion's engineer equipment and tactical vehicles. Seeing the platforms mounted or in the configurations in which they will be used is also helpful.

Task Force Hammer's successful integration of over 150 Soldiers has led to continued success of numerous construction missions. Manpower shortages are filled as quickly as possible. Furthermore, Soldiers arrive to their company with the knowledge and awareness necessary to succeed in a challenging combat environment.



New Hammer Soldiers participate in the vehicle recovery class